

tims such as bereaved family members are rarely shown. Entertainment program content which creates sympathy for the victim is thus relatively rare, and indeed such content might well be avoided by many people in the audience. Who is comfortable empathizing with and sharing the suffering of the victim? Victims have usually been portrayed in a manner which does not cause the kind of discomfort which would alienate viewers, and these portrayals may therefore directly or indirectly produce comfort and pleasure for the audience. This situation poses a very difficult set of problems.

Many changes in attitudes toward economic and political, as well as social welfare and health, issues might well be set in motion if violence is defined to include victims. Inevitably it would lead toward better recognition and better control of the violence some groups do, and of the violence some organizations and bureaucracies commit. It is likely that many institutions and bureaucracies, and individuals with vested interests in them, would resist invocation of such a broadly humanitarian definition of violence. In this regard, television has the potentiality to provide remarkable psychological assistance to our society and its institutions as, and if, they seek greater understanding and greater response to the plight of victims. This psychological preparation might help to give the time and the impetus for psychological, emotional, and behavioral changes in responsible officials and personnel of our institutions.

It is well known that in some cultures and under some circumstances those who feel victimized may come to identify with aggressors and later become aggressors themselves. A great deal of the individual and collective violence which has been studied reveals this pattern. Although this fact can easily be observed, it is less well known that under the circumstances when identification with the aggressor can occur, it only occurs after the victims fail in their repeated attempts to have the aggressors identify with them. Moreover, whenever aggressors can be helped to identify with victims, the aggression ceases. When aggressors continually fail to identify with victims, power is required to improve the victims' lots. Such dynamics underlie the various power movements which periodically emerge in the victimized groups of society. Power tactics might become unnecessary if broadscale identification with victims could be encouraged and reinforced, and television might be an important tool in such a movement. Thus, television might be able to move people to be "more human" on a plane where identification with victims would occur as readily as with aggressors and where the development of alliances would reduce divisiveness and conflict. Obviously, the utilization of television for this purpose involves some complex policy decisions by all of society. Psychological sacrifice would be involved if audiences were carried along and obliged to identify with and suffer along with victims, seeing them as they are in real life. If violence were more realistically portrayed on television, it would not be so easy to

watch, to accept, or to enjoy, and even less easy to participate in vicariously. It would even press the viewer in the direction of accepting his own violent and "evil" self. With this in mind, the television industry's code could be modified so that portrayal of the humanity of all victims would be encouraged. It is also important to portray and demonstrate persistently the humanity of all persons who play some role in the victims' experience. In this way viewers may identify victimizing tendencies within themselves instead of denying them and imputing them to less thoughtful, less considerate, less humane persons only. More realistic, higher-quality drama could emerge which might be more emotionally involving to individuals in the audience. Great drama, after all, involves the audience in the roles of all characters and limits the degree to which one may be accepted while another is rejected. Were changes in these directions to be introduced, the effects could be profound. For understanding of them, ongoing evaluative research programs would be needed.

Economic or political interests, and audience interests, are generally motivated to influence programming because of their strong profit and pleasure-seeking incentives respectively. We hope that more people in the community will develop an active concern with television and its educational potential so that society can perhaps speed up its snail-paced approach to the multitude of social problems involving human beings and their value systems. Though the television industry has made some contribution in this direction, there is very much more they might do. When this committee focused its efforts on the effects of televised violence upon children, we restricted ourselves to just a tiny portion of the field of television and social behavior. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare would do well to consider increased involvement in this field, not just in relation to the possibly harmful effects of television, but also to develop the experience and professional relationships needed to consider and stimulate television's health-promoting possibilities.

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## Appendix A: Initial Operations, June-October 1969

On June 3, 1969, HEW Secretary Robert H. Finch announced the appointment of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior. The committee's mission: to study the effects of television on social behavior, with its focus on the effects of televised violence on the behavior, attitudes, development, and mental health of children; the study is to be confined to scientific findings and the committee will make no policy recommendations.

Secretary Finch noted that if the study reveals there is an adverse connection between violence and television and mental health of children, it is likely that corrective action will be taken by the broadcast industry on a voluntary basis.

The original framework for the study had been laid down by Surgeon General William Stewart in his testimony, on March 12, 1969, before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications. Dr. Stewart said that there is little doubt that television has an impact on the viewing public. He pointed out that the average American child, by age 16, has spent more hours in front of a television set than in a classroom.

The Surgeon General stated that the task "cannot be accomplished by narrowly focused studies, since the violence a child sees on television is randomly interwoven into the total skein of television fare. . . it is essential to recognize that, with such a complex phenomenon, all the answers will not be forthcoming within the next few weeks or the next few months. The panel's findings and recommendations should be an important step in increasing our understanding of our social environment and of ourselves."

Thus the committee's work is concerned with producing new knowledge and will not restrict itself to reexamining existing information. A series of new research projects is now being developed which will increase our understanding of the effects of mass media and to answer the Surgeon General's question, "What kind of impact and how does it influence behavior?"

## Early inquiries

Early research of televised programming consisted mainly of limited studies and recorded testimony from scientists, educators, and irate parents.

The first public examination was taken in the early 1950s when the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, under a Ford Foundation grant, conducted monitoring surveys in four large cities.<sup>1</sup> The surveys found that in each of the four cities, drama accounted for about one-fourth of the total programming time; drama of crime and horror comprised approximately ten percent of all programming time. This percentage jumped when westerns were included in this category.

The issue of the effect of television violence on human behavior was brought up before the Congress of the United States in 1954 by the late Senator Estes Kefauver, who headed the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency. That committee launched hearings in response to mounting concern of parents and educators over the amount of time devoted to shows containing crime, brutality, sadism, and sex. Based on the testimony, the committee issued a report indicating that it felt television violence could be potentially harmful to young viewers.<sup>2</sup>

Representatives of television networks acknowledged the large amount of televised violence and promised to change the content, but subsequent surveys by the Senate subcommittee, in 1961 and 1964, revealed that the degree of violence in prime time programming had substantially increased. After this third survey in 1964, the overriding conclusion of the subcommittee was that "the extent to which violence and related activities are depicted on television today has not changed substantially from what it was in 1961 and remains greater than it was a decade ago. Further, violence and other antisocial behaviors are, to an overwhelming degree, televised during time periods in which the children's audience is a large one."

In 1964, Senator Thomas Dodd held hearings to review what had happened in the past three years, and he reported: "Not only did we fail to see an appreciable reduction of violence in new shows, but we also found that the most violent shows of the 1961-62 season have been syndicated and are now being reshowed on independent networks and stations."

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<sup>1</sup>The National Association of Educational Broadcasters conducted surveys of television content in Los Angeles (May 23-29, 1951), New York (January 4-10, 1951, 1952, 1953, January 25-31, 1954), New Haven (May 15-21, 1952, and Chicago (July 30-August 5, 1951).

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Investigation of Juvenile Delinquency in the United States, Television and juvenile delinquency*, 84th Congress, 2d session, January 16, 1956. Report No. 1466.

The Dodd committee reported that a relationship has been established between televised crime and violence and antisocial attitudes and behavior among juvenile viewers.<sup>3</sup> The report added: "And we are greatly impressed by television's achievements in the public areas and by its potential for good in both the education and entertainment fields. Yet it seems clear that television has been functioning as what an informed critic has termed 'a school for violence'."

On June 10, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson charged his newly created National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence with answering the question, "Are the seeds of violence nurtured through the public's airways. . . that reach the family and our young?"

In addition to holding hearings and reviewing existing research, the Commission undertook a content analysis of a week of entertainment television programming in 1967 and a comparable week in 1968, and conducted a survey of the public's actual experience with violence and its norms for violence.

On September 23, 1969, the Commission issued a statement in which it concluded that violence on television encourages real violence, especially among the children of poor, disorganized families. The Commission recommended: a reduction in programs containing violence; elimination of violence from children's cartoon programs; adoption of the British practice of scheduling programs containing significant violence only after 9 p.m.; permanent Federal financing for the Public Broadcast Corporation; and intensified research by the networks into the impact of television.<sup>4</sup> The Commission's report provides a valuable synthesis of existing information, adding a new content analysis of television programming and also an analysis of attitudes of television violence. Recognizing the need for new research, the National Commission called for long-term studies and cited the importance of evaluating televised violence over a protracted period.

## Scientific advisory committee formed

Despite the repeated examination of televised violence in the past decade and a half, no effective or integrated program of research was initiated. And no significant financial support had been available to stimulate new research in this one area, much less in the general area of television and social behavior.

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<sup>3</sup>U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Effects on young people of violence and crime portrayed on television*, Part 16 of Investigation of Juvenile Delinquency in the United States, July 30, 1964, p. 3731

<sup>4</sup>National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, *Commission Statement on Violence in Television Entertainment Programs*, September 23, 1969.

Some areas of social behavior as related to television viewing will always be in doubt. No answers stand unchallenged in our rapidly changing society. It has become obvious that a comprehensive program to stimulate research in this area is long overdue. The National Commission's recommendation for further study is another indication that the pervasive medium of television, which is so much a part of our environment, must become the object of a more scientific analysis if we are to understand its impact and use it constructively.

In March 1969, Senator John O. Pastore, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, wrote to Secretary Finch, requesting that the Secretary direct the Surgeon General to appoint a committee "to devise techniques and to conduct a study under his (the Surgeon General's) supervision using those techniques which will establish scientifically insofar as possible what harmful effects, if any, these programs have on children.

President Richard Nixon, in a letter to Senator Pastore, affirmed his support for the proposed study.

The Surgeon General said that if television can have a negative effect on children, it can also be a positive stimulus. "We must learn more about how to promote this latter capability," he said, "while we learn to avoid the hazards of the former."

The National Institute of Mental Health was charged with the responsibility for the functions of the committee. On June 3, 12 distinguished scientists were appointed to the Advisory Committee. The Surgeon General was named Chairman; Eli A. Rubinstein, Ph.D., Assistant Director for Extramural Programs and Behavioral Sciences, NIMH, Vice-Chairman; and Richard A. Moore, Special Consultant to the Secretary, Secretary Finch's liaison with the Committee.

On June 16-17, ten days after its formation, the Scientific Advisory Committee held its first formal meeting. The general task and mode of operation were defined as follows: (1) The Committee will serve in a scientific advisory role to the Surgeon General and to the research, to be developed by the National Institute of Mental Health when the full-time staff has been organized. (2) NIMH will serve as the central resource for the work and will be the referral point for inquiries and responses about the Committee's work. (3) The next step will be the development of research projects to obtain new knowledge about television's effects on social behavior. Approximately \$1,000,000 has been earmarked for actual research initiated by or recommended by this committee. (4) The Advisory Committee recommended that recent relevant activities such as the work of the Mass Media Task Force of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence be carefully examined to ensure maximum use of any recent findings in the initiation of research studies. (5) Because the present state of research in television and social

behavior is the work of individual investigators and is largely uncoordinated, the Advisory Committee recommended that the NIMH National Clearinghouse for Mental Health Information provide a comprehensive and continuing source of information about research on television and social behavior. (6) The committee agreed that it would be inappropriate to take a narrow view of the problem of television and social behavior. It is therefore recommended that the research efforts be undertaken in two phases: a short-term objective of a year or two to try to obtain better immediate answers, and a long-term objective to develop a continuing comprehensive examination of the process of child development which is influenced by the impact of television on social behavior. (7) No firm completion date for the study was set.

During July, August, and September of 1969 a series of activities was initiated to launch a comprehensive program of research. A staff of professional and technical personnel was employed to serve as the program's staff secretariat. Invitations were extended to 50 research organizations and to about 100 key research scientists to participate in the program. This was done through extensive personal and telephone contact with scientists in relevant fields of research and by direct letters of inquiry to selected research centers. In addition, an announcement was placed in the Commerce Business Daily inviting inquiry about the program from qualified research organizations.

The Scientific Advisory Committee held its second meeting on September 24-25 to discuss an overall research plan and to consider a variety of research proposals in various stages of development.

Additional full committee meetings will be held periodically. At the same time, members are also individually participating in those aspects of the program development related to their specific areas of competence.

## Related projects are studied

The National Clearinghouse for Mental Health Information, NIMH, is providing the committee with information on relevant studies now being conducted by various research groups. Being compiled is a comprehensive bibliography of all published research which has some bearing in this area. A listing of about 800 broadly relevant citations is now in development. The most pertinent of these will be made into an annotated bibliography.

Some currently active research projects funded by Federal programs relate to our goals. One researcher, over the past seven years, has investigated the factors that affect the imitation of aggressive behavior in children. Specifically, he has investigated the likelihood that children will display aggressive behavior after seeing a film which shows adults engaged in various kinds of aggressive action.



Another researcher has proposed a new line of research that attempts to map the ecology of aggressive behavior in order to understand not only the characteristics of the aggressor but also the "target" of the aggression. The study's hypothesis is that some individuals and events are more likely than others to stimulate aggressive behavior.

Another major project analyzes the forms of aggressive behavior, which are described as anger, hostility, and overt aggression. The object is to investigate ways in which people respond to provocation. Other researchers have studied the role of imitation or vicarious learning in social development.

A different line of research is investigating the factors in social development that relate to aggressive acting-out in various population subgroups. It is related to the finding that in clinically isolated delinquents and impulsive persons one's self-concept is a major influence on the likelihood of aggressive behavior.

Other research deals with the process of communication in the family setting as it related to antisocial behavior in early childhood; analyses of the problem of imitation; and the effects of mass media on altruistic behavior, family interaction, and attitude change.

## Summary of proposed research

Through an intensive effort at stimulating new research, and as a result of discussions with various scientists, a number of projects are under way and others are now under consideration. Most of these projects are being developed by leading researchers at some of the major universities in the country.

Research projects that have been initiated and other research proposals that are being considered bear on a number of interrelated issues. Central among these explorations is an effort to obtain a much better understanding of television viewing behavior and thereby establish a meaningful base for evaluating effects. One proposal attempts to assess the types of television fare viewed by adolescents but also relating these viewing patterns to such factors as parent-child communication, disciplinary practice, attitudinal similarity, and a host of demographic variables.

Along a somewhat different line of analysis, there is an attempt to study the viewing behavior of young children within the family setting. In this instance, however, the emphasis is not on the content, but rather on the process of viewing. The proposed study attempts to map the child's behavior during the period of actual viewing, with specific reference to parent-child and peer interaction and attentional variables. The study also will include comparisons between black-white and varying socioeconomic levels.

Overlaying these projects, a procedure is being developed to assess attitudes about television. The main thrust of this survey will attempt to relate program preferences and viewing patterns with a wide range of variables such as experience with aggressive activities, personal value orientation and moral development, and attitudes about aggression. The proposed survey will sample from a specified population with a wide age range and varying socioeconomic and ethnic groups.

One researcher, in response to criticisms of previous laboratory investigations, has proposed a series of interrelated experiments designed to more directly assess the effects of televised violence. This study would use stimulus materials which reflect standard television programming and will measure behaviors which directly relate to the child's daily experiences.

Much of the proposed research activity is specifically directed at children. One major project being considered begins with the assumption that the usual procedures for studying the effects of television violence may not be easily generalizable to the real world of children. The researchers suggest that the observation of televised violence does not influence the child to act out this particular scene but that, rather, such observation operates to modify the child's attitudes toward violence. They propose to study this hypothesis with a developmental approach to gain an understanding about levels of moral development and attitudes about the acceptability of violent behavior.

While others are concerned with the effects of media use, one researcher will attempt to investigate young children's patterns of media use *per se*, as they relate to the children's personal style, parent and peer group conflicts, and antisocial aggression.

Several researchers have designed investigations of the content of standard television fare with particular emphasis on aggressive material. One investigator has addressed himself to an analysis of physical violence in the mass media, while in another approach we will be more concerned with manifestations of verbal aggression. Still another proposal concentrates on racial and social class differences in the perception of televised violence.

The committee and the staff are examining the possibility of initiating an extensive field study in which differing television programming would be offered for two or more hours a day for a number of months to two matched audiences of children at home. This could be done through CATV. While this would be an unusual opportunity for measuring effects, there are a number of unsolved research problems which need to be considered before such a study can begin.

The framing of the total research program is complicated. Staff members are making a special effort to develop as much interrelationship and integration of the individual studies as possible. Where appropriate,

common measuring instruments will be used. In certain instances the same stimulus material will be used. It also is anticipated that the various investigators collaborating with the total research program will be called in from time to time to discuss mutual problems.

No final completion date has been established for the entire effort. Much depends on the initial progress in the studies now being organized. It seems clear even at this early date that an integrated research program has been initiated. The study of television's effects on social behavior is not easily approached solely by examination in a laboratory setting. Nor can any single project—whether an analysis of content, examination of attitudes, or even a careful exploration of viewing behavior—provide definitive answers. What seems necessary is a comprehensive research effort which can effectively facilitate the exploration of the broad question of the relationship between television and social behavior.

The Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee, therefore, is exploring many phases of the process of transmitting and receiving televised communications: in the clinical laboratory and the natural setting, on both the child and his milieu, both physical and verbal violence, televised violence in both real and fantasy form, and recognizing positive and negative elements in this powerful form of mass communication.

October 30, 1969

## Appendix B: Television and Social Behavior Program Reports and Papers

	<u>Author and Title</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Description</u>
1.	Baldwin & Lewis Violence in Television: The Industry Looks at Itself	48 producers, writers and directors	Interviews were conducted with the writers, producers, and directors of network action-adventure programming. The respondents were asked to describe the role of violence in such programs and how the industry handles this aspect (i.e., censorship activities). In addition, the subjects were asked to respond to the critics of television violence and to comment on their beliefs about the possible effects of viewing televised violence.
2.	Bechtel, Achelpohl & Akers Correlates between Observed Behavior and Questionnaire Responses on Television Viewing	20 families Total N = 82	Video tape cameras were installed in the homes of participating families. Observations of viewing behavior were continuously recorded for five days. The video-tape records were coded, in 2-1/2 minute intervals for attention to the set (e.g., watching/not watching), and types of simultaneous activity (e.g., eating, reading). These behavior records were compared with the viewer's responses to questionnaire measures of viewing behavior.
3.	Blatt, Spencer & Ward A Cognitive Develop- mental Study of Children's Reactions to Television Advertising	20 children 5 kindergarten 5 second grade 5 fourth grade 5 sixth grade	Children were shown a one-hour videotape of "Saturday morning" television programming which included cartoons and other children's programs, plus 15 minutes of commercials. On the following day, the children were interviewed, in groups of five, concerning their reactions to the commercials (e.g. recall and understanding of the commercial message) and general attitudes toward advertising.
4.	Cantor The Role of the Producer in Choosing Children's Television Content	24 producers and writers	Twenty producers and four writers of children's programs were interviewed. Respondents were asked to describe the manner in which shows are selected by the networks and sponsors; the relationship between the producers and network; and the producer's conception of the audience for his program.

<u>Author and Title</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Description</u>
5. Chaffee Television and Adolescent Aggressiveness		A summary of current research on the relationship between viewing televised violence and the aggressive behavior of adolescents.
6. Chaffee & McLeod Adolescent Television Use in the Family Context	1292 junior and senior high school 641 eight grade 651 tenth grade	This survey related adolescent's television viewing (e.g. viewing televised violence) to factors such as; IQ, parent's television use, SES, and family communication patterns. The latter factor was defined by the parent's relative emphasis on either socio-(i.e., maintaining interpersonal harmony/repression of conflicts) or concept-(i.e., free discussion and mutual understanding of conflicts) orientations.
7. Clark Race Identification, and Television Violence Experiment I	71 teenagers 38 white 33 black	Adolescents were shown a videotape of a <i>Dragnet</i> episode which featured three main characters: "Black Militant", "Black Policeman", and "White Policeman." The subjects viewed the program in either racially "mixed" or "homogeneous" groups. Post viewing questionnaires assessed the viewer's identification with the various characters and the role of black consciousness in such identification.
Experiment II	45 white, college students	Subjects viewed the <i>Dragnet</i> program in dyads composed of either a black or white confederate who either engaged in social communication (i.e. friendly conversation) or remained silent during the viewing period.
8. Clark & Blankenburg Trends in Violent Content in Selected Mass Media		Several forms of mass media (e.g. front-page newspaper stories, a weekly magazine, and television entertainment programming) were inspected for the presence of violent content and their treatment of violent themes. Comparison were obtained between media violence and environmental or real violence (i.e. FBI Uniform Crime Reports).
9. Comstock Media Control and Content: An Overview		A review of this program's research on decision-making in television production and violence in television content.

	<u>Author and Title</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Description</u>
10.	Dahlgren Television in the Socialization Process: Structures and Programming of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation		A description of the broadcast policies of Sveriges Radio.
11.	Dominick & Greenberg Attitudes Toward Violence: The Interaction of TV Exposure, Family Attitudes, and Social Class	838 children 434 4th, 5th and 6th grade boys 404 4th, 5th and 6th grade girls	Each child's prior exposure to televised violence, his perception of his parents' attitudes concerning the appropriateness of violence, and his family's socio-economic level were related to various measures of the child's attitudes toward violence (e.g. willingness to use violence, perceived effectiveness of violence, and approval of aggression).
12.	Ekman, Liebert, Friesen, Harrison, Zlatichin, Malstrom & Baron Facial Expressions of Emotion While Watching Televised Violence as Predictors of Subsequent Aggression	65, 5-6 yr. children (30 boys and 35 girls)	Children's facial expressions while viewing televised violence were used as an index of the child's emotional reaction to such fare. This index was then used to assess the relationship between the child's emotional response to observing violent acts and his subsequent willingness to engage in interpersonal aggression.
13.	Feshbach Reality and Fantasy in Filmed Violence Experiment I	129, 9-11 year old children	Children viewed either real (i.e., newsreel), fantasy (i.e., Hollywood movie), or control (e.g. circus movie) films and were then allowed to play a game in which they could engage in aggressive acts against an ostensible victim.
	Experiment II	40, 9-11 year old children	In this study, each child was informed that the movie he was about to view was either real ("NBC newsreel") or fantasy ("Hollywood movie"). Measures of the child's subsequent aggressive behavior were identical to the first study.

<u>Author and Title</u>		<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Description</u>
Experiment III		30, 9-11 year old children	This study was similar to the second experiment except that each child was informed that his aggressive behavior in the "guessing game" was only make believe. Results of this study were compared with the results of the previous experiment.
14.	Foulkes, Belvedere & Television and Aggression: A Reply to Liebert, Sobol, and Davidson		A reply to a critique of the catharsis thesis (see items 15, 34, and 35).
15.	Feshbach & Singer Television and Aggression: Some Reactions to the Liebert, Sobol, and David- son Review and Response		A response to a comment on a reply to a critique of the catharsis thesis (see items 14, 34 and 35).
16.	Foulkes, Belvedere & Brubaker Televised Violence and Dream Content	40, 10-12 year-old boys	This study was designed to assess the relationship between viewing televised violence the subsequent content of the child's dreams. Children viewed either a violent or non violent program immediately prior to bedtime. Their dreams were monitored during the sleep period and scored on a variety of dimensions (e.g. hostility, vividness and hedonic tone).
17.	Friedman & Johnson Mass Media Use and Aggression: A Pilot Study	80 preadolescent boys 40 "aggressive" 40 "nonaggressive"	Adolescent's attitudes toward aggression (e.g. tendency to engage in overt physical aggression) and his patterns of television use (e.g., amount time spent viewing, program preferences) were studied in an attempt to assess the relationship between viewing televised violence and engaging in antisocial acts.
18.	Gerbner The Structure and Process of Television Program Content Regulation in the United States		A description of broadcast and content control structures operative in American television programming.